

**Sent:** Friday, May 06, 2011 5:28 PM

**To:** John Anderson

**Subject:** Albania Elections This Sunday - Background Thoughts and Media Opptys

Greetings All,

Please forgive the group email (and forgive that I am not writing directly. I am on the road and am having my assistant, Tim Kopper, send this out for me from his email address). I have met and talked with some of you before, but for the others, permit me to introduce myself. I am John Anderson, a former Washington Post reporter, now a media consultant with the Podesta Group in Washington. My company recently was hired by Albania to help with its international public relations; I'm writing today, because of Sunday's elections.

First, a brief word about my MO and ground rules. My main job is to help the government with outreach to the international media. For instance, I can help journalists with travel to Albania and with arranging interviews (in person, over the phone) with senior Albanian officials. I am not, however, a government spokesperson, and I never talk on the record. My written communication to you is never to be quoted, unless stipulated that it is on the record (for instance, sometimes I will include a statement from the government as an attachment, and that obviously would be on the record). Mostly, however, I am a facilitator, hoping to make sure that you get information you need from the government, and that you understand what the government's positions are, so they can be fairly and accurately reported.

Along those lines, **below are some background thoughts about Sunday's elections.** These are for your guidance, to help put the voting in a fuller context.

Please reach out if I can help with the election story or any other matters in the days, weeks and months ahead. To be clear: I work for the government, not a candidate or party, so on the immediate story, I can only help with issues revolving around the election process.

Looking forward to working with you.

Best regards,

John Anderson/Podesta Group

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**ALBANIA ELECTION THOUGHTS:**

• Over the years Albania has implemented numerous reforms to improve the country's electoral code and administration of elections. As with any emerging democracy, reforming the electoral process takes time. Ultimately, successful implementation depends on commitment and participation of all parties, including the opposition.

• Despite some remaining challenges, Albania has made significant progress. The government's efforts were acknowledged by the international community, the EU, and various civil society groups.

- The reform of the electoral system and the adoption in November 2008 by the Albanian Parliament of the new electoral law meets one of the important conditions imposed by the EU and NATO to advance integration.
- The new law improved legal framework and introduced new tools intended to eliminate electoral fraud, such as introduction of an electronic voter registration system and identification procedure.
- The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) 2009 Election Observation Mission for Parliamentary elections noted that the 2009 Parliamentary elections "marked tangible progress with regard to the voter registration and identification process, the legal framework, adopted in a consensual manner by the two main parties, the voting, counting and the adjudication of election disputes. [The new Code] brought about substantial improvement... Overall the legal framework provides a thorough technical foundation for the conduct of democratic elections."
- The OSCE noted that "the Central Election Commission (CEC) prepared and administered elections professionally and took several steps to increase the transparency of the process."
- Significant developments include computerized voter lists, as opposed to paper records; new, secure ID cards issued to every citizen; detailed regulations for campaign media coverage, and free paid airtime on public and private broadcast media; introduction of 30 percent gender requirement for candidate lists; and participation of national minorities.
- Post-election, to address concerns of the opposition and resolve other challenges, the Government in cooperation with the opposition agreed to establish a parliamentary commission to investigate disputes in the 2009 elections.
- The government is working hard to guarantee the freest, fairest and most transparent election ever on Sunday. That is its sole interest in this year's campaign.
- In anticipation of the May 2011 elections, the OSCE/ODIHR noted the following improvements:
  - o "The CEC has made progress on the adoption of regulations related to the preparation of elections, including on printing of ballot papers; and on defining counting procedures."
  - o "Most Commissions of Electoral Administration Zones (CEAZs) appear to be working efficiently and collegially with no major problems."
  - o "The monitored media are providing extensive coverage of the election campaign within newscasts and special electoral programmes."
  - o "Several government officials, notably the President and the Prime Minister, have made appeals for a peaceful and lawful conduct of the campaign."